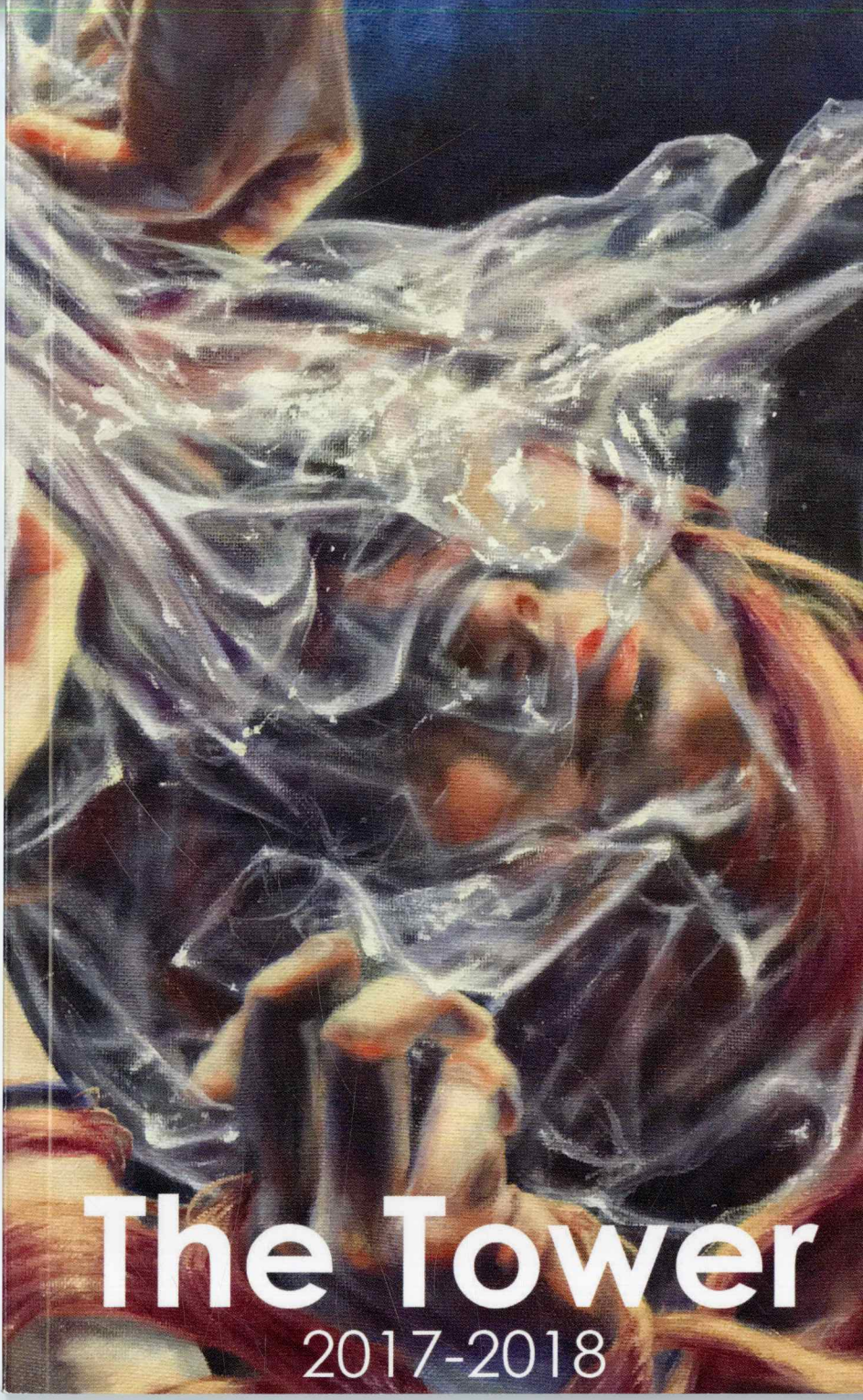

The Tower

2017-2018

The Tower

University of Montevallo
2017-2018

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Letter from the Editor

In my four years at Montevallo, I have heard the university bragging about the diversity and the uniqueness of our student body, but I don't think I fully recognized the beauty and impact of this diversity until I became Editor of *The Tower*. As a creative forum, *The Tower* grants students permission to express their thoughts, concerns, and hopes through whatever lens serves their narrative and exemplifies what they are trying to convey.

I could not have dreamed of a better time to be Editor. In the wake of so much hate and fear in our political system and world, there has been courage and hope and momentum to create change, to be our truest selves in the face of such hate, and to embody the change we wish to see in our world. I see this in the work students submitted. I see this in the body of work you currently have in your hands.

Ryann Taylor

Editor-in-Chief

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Atlas Hands

Leslie Smith

Montevallo, Alabama 1.0

Montevallo is an open window. Specifically, it's the window pried open by a screwdriver; paint bits, wood chips, entire decades on the office floor. Montevallo is the final shove that sends a window up, the last flakes of white paint gone. The guilty screwdriver then gets passed around, first to neighbors, the office, the department, until all the floors are dirty with paint and splinters. The screwdriver returns to the original window and props it up.

Without support it falls back, reseals as the wood swells with rain, heat, and academic bullshit. The rooms stay stuffy. The students, the department can't breathe. No air, no ideas move.

If Atlas lived in Montevallo he would be a flathead screwdriver.

Montevallo, Alabama 2.0

There is a crack at the window. Could it be a bird? Have the squirrels finally gone nuts?

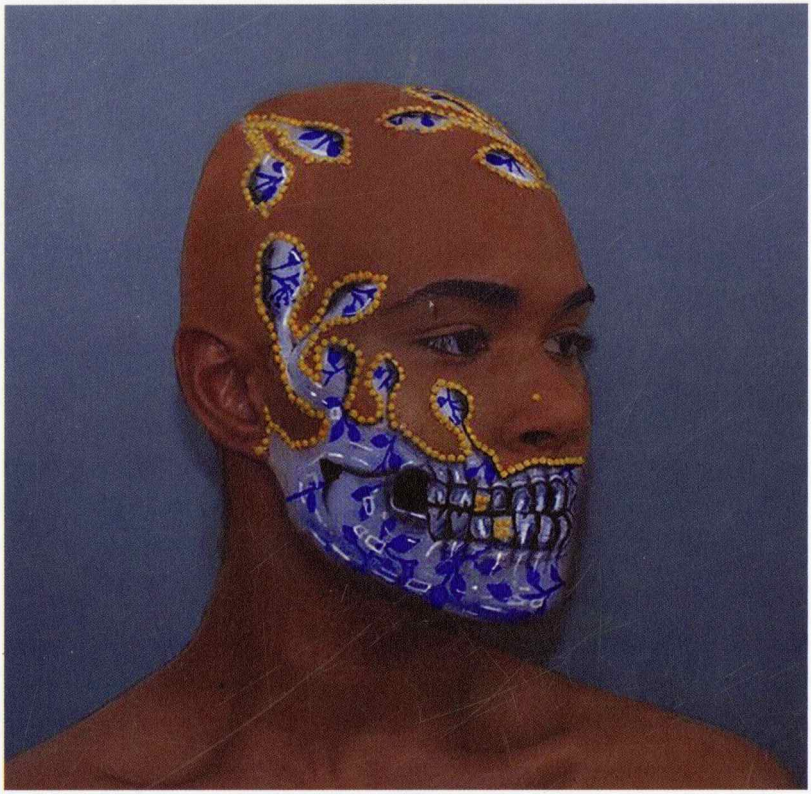
No! It is only the barefoot student with a screwdriver. What always happens in this place begins to happen. Oddity strikes in an uncommon place; a student out of order, never stopped, a window pried open where doors are closed, a breeze, a shout, the slap of un-shoed feet. First a thought, then a series of actions that always

ends in a mad dash, a wide smile, and messy hair; a gaggle of students in the office looking for more windows to crack open with their borrowed screwdrivers. Another heat wave in October; another stuffy room opened like an egg, the shells repurposed into protection shells for the students with wide eyes and grabbing fingers and busy minds that need open windows for all their thoughts to fit.

Witch Girl

DeAndra Hodge

Medium: Digital Art



Relmxx Fantasy

Jaylen Dill

Medium: Makeup Design

When the Sun Sets East

Levi Pulford

"Give me a place to stand, and I will move the Earth." —Archimedes

It was the summer before my final year of high school. At the time, I was doing a little bit of everything and a whole lot of nothing. My days were spent in shopping plazas or parks, riding around with the two people I could call friends. My nights were spent mostly at home, under the tense atmosphere my parents brought down with their unspoken disapproval of me. I had already been forced to transfer to another high school almost a year ago because of *the incident*. Now I went to a private school in the next city over. Sure, it added almost another thirty minutes in travel time, but it came with the benefit of nobody knowing what their son had done. Needless to say, I hardly spoke to my parents, and they hardly spoke to me.

There was a lot of talk coming from them when it all first came out, but after I showed no signs of remorse for the situation, the conversations tapered off into what was now a commonly-held silent ritual of never asking me where I had been, who I had been with, or what we had been doing. Those questions had only received answers they didn't want to hear—up until they made me change schools, that is. They made sure to pick a school that wouldn't allow me to

have those kinds of answers. The class I entered into was significantly smaller than my last one, and the types of people that went to the school were not exactly my kind of crowd— if you could call my two friends at my old school a "crowd."

I was thankful for summer because it meant I was free to start seeing them again. Their names were Jade and Noah. Jade was a magnet for drama. One time she was caught with a 19-year-old girl in the parking lot outside the school. She wasn't caught by a teacher or administrator or security, luckily enough, but instead she had been discovered by one of the school's janitors, Mr. Price. Jade thinks the only reason he didn't give her up was because he was probably enjoying the show. "Sexist perv," she had called him.

Noah was the most normal of the three of us. For most of junior year, he had a girlfriend named Ashleigh, although he rarely saw her outside of school. It was after they broke up, towards the end of the school year, that Noah started hanging out with Trevor. Trevor had graduated high school the year before and usually hung out at the mall, smoking cigarettes outside by the dumpster with two or three of his crew.

If it hadn't been for these people I called friends, my life might have taken a different turn. Maybe it should have, but then I wouldn't have met Atlas. The name fit him because he would hold the sky over my head and later bear all its consequences. It started the day that Noah dragged Jade and me to the mall.

"Great, we're going to become mall rats,"

Jade said in the passenger seat of Noah's car.

"What's wrong with hanging out at the mall? You go almost every other weekend with one of your girlfriends, anyways," Noah said, gripping the steering wheel a bit too hard and then glancing at the rearview mirror.

"Yeah, but when I go to the mall with *Courtney*, we actually buy things. You know, the whole reason people go to malls," Jade said. "Archie, back me up on this." She turned back to look at me. I looked at her then made eye contact with Noah in the rearview mirror. Things had been tense between not only Jade and Noah recently but also between Noah and me, for reasons unknown at the time. Sorry, Jade.

"I don't know, I'm just glad to be out of the house and out with you guys. Plus, we finally get to meet Trevor," I said.

"Yeah, Jade. Don't you want to meet Trevor? You're always going on about how you need more friends that are like you," Noah ventured.

"Like me? Like *me*? Oh, is Trevor a lesbian, Noah? And I'm sorry, but what makes you think that just because I would like a more diverse group of people to surround myself with," Jade gestured wildly around her, "that means I would ever want to spend my day with a group of mall rats who do nothing but sit around on their asses all day at the pathetic excuse for a mall in this deadbeat town?"

Noah sighed. "What else do you have to do?" He had a point. Jade went quiet and turned

on the radio, yet somehow the silence among us was louder.

***

Things with Trevor did not go over well. He used the f-word. A lot.

"Nothin' wrong with a 'lil experimentin'. I mean, just 'cause I'm bi, don't make me no faggot," Trevor had said, almost immediately after Noah brought up how Jade was a lesbian. Noah's remark had almost come off as a disclaimer to Trevor's crew, as a *hey, don't try anything with her, because she's not interested in getting into your cargo-pants*. Jade turned her body away from Trevor and Noah and the rest of the mallrats and faced me. She was clutching her bag as if to stop herself from swinging it—or she might have been getting ready to.

Noah had turned his head, too, to look at me after the utterance of the word. I was unfazed on the surface. Trevor and his friends wouldn't know about the incident—not here in the city.

Trevor took a drag off the stump of a cigarette he had left. "You wanna know who's a faggot," he started again, not paying attention to Jade now but directing his words to Noah. I tensed. "That guy, Lassie. What a flamer. Am I right, guys?" Trevor's crew nodded and laughed. Now Noah looked uncomfortable.

"His name's Atlas, and he's actually decent to hang out with," Noah said to the ground.

"Yeah, well, I call him Lassie 'cause he's a bitch."

Jade quickly grabbed my arm and said,

loudly, "Hey, Archie, I just remembered I need to go buy some things for my mom. Her birthday's next week. Mind coming with me?" She was pulling me away before I could even give an answer. I looked back at Noah. His eyes followed us for a moment, but then he quickly turned away and forced a laugh at something one of the mall rats said.

Jade stormed into the mall, pulling my arm behind her, and made her way to the closest store she saw. It wasn't long after we were in an aisle of women's shirts that she finally said, "I just can't believe Noah's hanging out with them, let alone that he's telling them my business. They're not even *mall* rats, they're just plain *sewer* rats. What Trevor was saying is not okay. And Noah didn't even stop him, even though he knows that you—" She stopped herself.

"Look, it's okay. I'm sure Noah feels guilty, and he'll apologize to us."

"No. No. Noah's just gonna keep kissing Trevor's ass. You didn't hear this from me, okay? What I'm about to tell you does not leave this clearance rack," Jade said as she shifted through the shirts without even looking at them. "I know that I probably shouldn't tell you this, but you're going to find out eventually." She breathed in deeply through her nose and stopped moving the shirts for dramatic effect.

I expected her to tell me that Noah was doing drugs. He had been going through a hard time after his break-up with Ashleigh, and it was apparent that Trevor's crew did more than just

smoke cigarettes, and what other reason would Noah have to hang out with them than to self-medicate? Her pause made me uncertain.

"Noah is sleeping with Trevor," she said. I looked at her and then back at the store's entrance. I thought about Trevor and his scumbag crew, and then I thought about Noah and the tension I'd felt between us lately.

"No, he's not. Noah's straight. How would you even know that?" I said, not sure I wanted to know.

"Because, and you don't know this either, I met Atlas last week. I bumped into him and Noah at Lucky's—you know, the coffee shop a few blocks from here. I think they were having a date, because Noah was acting all weird and Atlas was super friendly. Afterward, Noah texted me and asked me not to tell anyone where he was."

"Okay, but that doesn't prove that Noah is sleeping with Trevor. It sounds like if he's sleeping with anybody, he's sleeping with Atlas."

"He might be, but—shit, here comes Noah. He sees us. Change of subject," Jade said and then was quickly going on about how what her mother *really* wanted was a new pair of shoes, but this store was not going to carry anything nice enough.

"Hey, guys. Um, Trevor and his friends had to leave," Noah said, as if Jade or I particularly cared that we missed their departure. Then he added, "Sorry about that, Jade. I just didn't want them to start hitting on you. Trevor's usually okay,

but the other two can be kind of... assertive," he finished.

"It's not just me you should be apologizing to, Noah," Jade said without taking her eyes off of one of the clearance items she was holding. Noah looked at her, then to me, and then back at her. He clearly didn't understand, or he was at least putting on an act that he didn't. After a moment, I volunteered for us to go get something to eat, and the situation was ignored as we made our way to the food court.

***

It must have been a few weeks after that day at the mall when Atlas messaged me. The whole month of May had gone by, and I had barely spoken to Noah. Jade, on the other hand, had been almost glued to my side. We were having a late lunch at one of our favorite spots, a Japanese sushi house in the center of town, when my phone lit up. *(1) New Message*. I clicked it open.

Hey, Noah gave me your number. Hope that's okay. This is his friend, Atlas.

I stared at the message for several moments, trying to understand if there was something I was missing. Why had Noah given Atlas my number? And did Atlas mean to say "his friend," as if he was Noah's only friend? Or was he saying that they weren't anything more than friends? Was Noah mad at me for something?

"Earth to space cadet, Archie. Hello? Can you read me, over?" Jade waved her hand in front of my face. I turned off my phone and

redirected my attention to her.

"Were you saying something? I'm sorry."

"Yeah, I was, but now I wanna know what could possibly be more interesting than the story about how me and my girlfriend nearly drowned in a creek yesterday." I knew she was exaggerating, so I ignored her bait momentarily.

"Have you talked to Noah recently?"

"Ugh, no. Why? Did he message you?"

"Not exactly. Atlas did, though."

"Shut up. Let me see." I showed her the message. "What the... Well, you gotta ask him what he wants. Ask him if it's about Noah. And if it is, tell him we're not friends with backstabbers."

I typed out the message—minus the last part—and sent it, hesitating to make sure I didn't sound too eager or too closed off. Just casual. I'm having lunch with my friend, what's not casual?

The next message came a moment later. Jade's green eyes lit up with interest and looked at me. I knew she wanted me to read it to her, so I started before she could even ask.

"He said, 'No, it's not about Noah. Well, kind of. I was hoping we could get coffee sometime to talk about it. Plus, I'd like to get to meet you. Noah's talked about you before.'" As I read it out loud, I read the last sentence over slowly. *What did Noah tell him,* I thought to myself and immediately my mind went to last year's incident.

Jade's first thoughts went to somewhere more dramatic. "He's asking you out on a date!"

"No, he is not," I said, "He mentioned coffee. And wants to talk about Noah. It's not

dinner and a movie, Jade."

"There are other kinds of dates, stupid. Like yesterday, when Courtney and I went to the creek..." She began to trail back into her own life, and I was just relieved to have the attention back on her. While she was talking, though, I texted Atlas back: *How's tomorrow at 2 sound?*

***

I was wearing a black and white raglan, blue skinny jeans, and some white sneakers. I made sure to dress as casually as I could pull off while still trying to look better than I did on any other day. I had gotten there early and saved myself a seat in a booth in the corner of Lucky's Coffee, so I would not have to awkwardly look for someone I didn't know. I spent the next several minutes trying to make myself look as busy as a person can look with only a cup of coffee for company. I folded my arms then unfolded them. I picked up my phone and read over old text messages. I looked out the window.

"Are you Archie? I'm Atlas. Thank you for waiting for me."

A hand extended itself to me, somehow both connected and disconnected from the voice I just heard. He had a feminine voice, much more feminine than mine or anyone I knew. His height was notable, and his hand was soft as I stood up and took it. Glancing up, I saw a face that was neatly cropped by dark brown hair and found two soft brown eyes meeting my own. I introduced myself, and even though he might have been only a year older than me, I felt like

he was much older.

"So, what's going on with Noah?" I asked, sitting back down, not knowing how to make small talk with the stranger in front of me.

"Oh, well. He's fine, as far as I know. He's been spending a lot of time with his new friends. I haven't really seen Noah in about a week, to be honest. I was wondering if he had talked to you and maybe said anything about me." Atlas looked down and then back up as he said this, adjusting his shirt collar then folding his hands on the table.

"Oh, you mean Trevor and his crew? Yeah, I haven't seen Noah in about a month because my friend Jade and I don't really get along with them," I said, feeling sympathetic toward Atlas because I knew what he was going through.

"I keep realizing that going to high school in a town this small is like having one degree of separation between you and everyone else," he said. My face must have had a slightly confused look on it, because he continued, "What I mean is, everybody knows everybody else. See, there's this idea that there is a maximum of six degrees or ways that separate you from anybody else in the world. A complete stranger in... I don't know, Malaysia or somewhere, is somehow connected to you because you know someone who knows someone who knows someone else who is related to someone who once kissed someone at a party who is actually the brother of the stranger to you in Malaysia." He counted off the hypothetical people on his hand as he said them and then

dropped his hands into his lap. A silence came over the table.

While I was still digesting this idea, Atlas stood and excused himself to order a cup of coffee. I guess he figured maybe he said too much. I watched him wait in line; he kept rubbing his palms on his jeans. I looked at my own hands and found they were also sweating. I rubbed them on my jeans like Atlas had and took a sip of my coffee. I was halfway done with mine by the time he was seated again.

"I was thinking about what you said while you were over there. Where did you hear that?" I prompted, hoping to make him talk more. This would make things easier on me, at least.

"Oh, I read a lot," was all he said in reply, his face slightly pinkening.

"Oh, okay. Well, how do you and Noah know each other? I mean, how did you guys meet?" I asked.

"We met through Trevor, actually," he said. "Although, Trevor and I don't talk anymore," he quickly added.

The next half hour or so was spent playing an unacknowledged game of twenty questions. Where did he go to school? Eastgate High. What did he do outside of school? Read, mostly. He had a best friend, Ashleigh, who he hung out with and they watched movies and had sleepovers. His parents let him sleep over with a girl? "It's not like that," he said. I wished my parents would let me have sleepovers with Jade. "Why wouldn't they?" he asked. Because I'm not really allowed

to have sleepovers with anyone. "Why not?" Because of the incident, but I didn't tell him that.

I just said, "My parents are really strict and don't like the friends I have. They don't even let me drive." He just nodded as if he understood, although it sounded like he didn't really have to understand.

"But wait, how did you get here then?" he asked.

"Jade dropped me off. Noah used to drive us around everywhere, but now that he's been out of the picture, Jade uses her mom's car."

"Well, if you want, I can take you home. It wouldn't be a problem, really," he offered.

"That's okay. I can't go straight home, anyways. I live about thirty minutes away. Jade's gonna give me a ride home," I said.

"Well, I could take you to Jade's house, if you wanted. That way you don't have to stay and wait for her. Or, I mean, I could wait until she gets here. I'm in no hurry. It's up to you."

I considered my options for a moment, and not wanting to risk Jade coming in and saying something embarrassing in front of Atlas, I accepted his offer. We both made our way to the parking lot, and Atlas pointed out which car was his. He walked around to the passenger side and opened the door for me while also trying to discreetly throw some books and a bag into the backseat. I thanked him, unsure what to make of his gesture, and got in. His car had an earthy but also fiery kind of smell that was somehow comforting.

"Your car smells nice," I said, hoping to maintain small talk for the ten minute drive to Jade's.

"Thanks. It's cinnamon. It's supposed to be good for memory, and it has a lot of other health benefits," he said in a way that suggested he learned that from reading. He wasn't anything like Jade or Noah. He wasn't like any of my friends or anybody I went to school with, even at my new school. He seemed to know a lot, but I could tell he didn't mean to show it. He was too polite to show off. I just sat quietly after that, and he made no attempt to fill the air between us. And so, apart from giving him the occasional directions, I thought about the different types of people there are in the world, and how you can go a whole lifetime not realizing who's living in the same city as you, even one as small as ours. I was thankful it was only the one degree of separation that had been between us.

When we arrived at Jade's house, he stopped at the bottom of the driveway and turned to say, "I had a really nice time talking to you. Maybe we can hang out again sometime?" I made eye contact with him, and the space between us filled with his sugary voice and cinnamon and a golden-brown color. I wanted to say, *yes, we should hang out again* – but instead I looked away and noticed somebody outside Jade's house.

Our moment ended when I said, "Oh, shit. Jade's mom just came outside. She's probably wondering who just pulled up. I gotta go." I turned

to him and gave a quick smile before I hopped out of his car, reluctant to leave behind what felt to be a crucial moment in our time together.

***

Jade took me home before it got dark. The whole drive there she didn't once talk about herself; rather, she asked about Atlas and what I thought of him and what Noah was up to. She was a good friend when it came to stuff that mattered. She just had a certain way that she saw the world – usually with it revolving around her.

For once, I was relieved to walk into my home. I needed to have my own space so that I could properly process what had taken place. Yeah, Jade had helped me recount my conversation with Atlas, but I had left out the cinnamon part. She seemed to like him from what she knew and suggested that at the very least he could replace Noah because she was still pretty pissed at him. I had simply said Noah would come back around.

Before I could make it to my room, though, my parents broke their silent ritual. "Archie, we need to talk to you," my mother said. She was sitting at the kitchen table, even though it looked like my mother and father had finished eating dinner at least an hour ago. My father was across the kitchen counter, looking like maybe he was removing the remains of dinner, but more than likely he was trying to not be a part of the discussion.

I stood in the center of the room, feeling

the weight of my mother's words and my father's silence, and I would have remained standing had my mother not said to sit down. The necessity of having me seated must have meant this would be a long conversation. Someone must have died. Or they found out something about my friends they didn't want to know, in which case I might be the one dead.

"Your father has something he needs to tell you. He's already told the rest of the family," my mother said. At this remark, my father cleared his throat and walked around the counter.

"Well, Archie, you might not like this," my father said, looking everywhere except at me, "but we're moving out of the state. We think it's the best move for the family. I have a job offer."

I stared at my mother. Her face gave nothing away. I was unable to tell if she approved or disapproved of the situation, but something told me this was not about a job. This was about me. What I did. Transferring schools wasn't enough for them.

"It's in Greensville, North Carolina. Your father will be making a lot more money there," my mother explained, as if my father didn't put enough details in the story for it to hold on its own. I could already see through it; I could see what they were thinking. *The grass will be greener in Greensville because no one will know our son is a gay.*

"We were thinking," my father interrupted, "that if you didn't want to start school there, it being your last year of high school, that we could

just homeschool you. Your mom will have some extra time on her hands at first, anyways."

"So you're just going to board me up miles away from my friends?" I asked.

"Honey, no. We just thought it might be too hard on you to start another new school in a new state with so many new people," my mother said.

"You mean that it might be too hard on you," I said, unable to control myself. I started to walk away.

"Archie, come back. If you want to go to the high school in Greenville, that's *fine* but you have to let us know within the next two weeks so we can get everything in order. We're moving at the first of July," she shouted.

I slammed the door to my room before my mother could say anything else. I heard her sigh and my father mumble something to her. I didn't care to hear anything past that. I pulled out my phone and thought about texting Jade, but I knew that she would make it out to be the end of the world for her. Who would she hang out with? What would she do? I wasn't prepared to handle Jade's feelings on top of my own. So I messaged Atlas instead. Why not at this point?

Hey.

Hey! What are you up to?

I'm just getting home. My parents just gave me some pretty bad news.

Oh no! What's going on?

We're moving in a month. To some place like 500 miles away.

Atlas didn't immediately respond to this last

message, so I threw myself on my bed and stared at my ceiling. When I was a little kid, we used to have popcorn ceilings in most of the houses we lived in, and I would draw out constellations of faces or words or whatever else I could find. Now, there was only a smooth, soft white. A clean, empty color– nothing like golden-brown. If I closed my eyes, I could still smell the cinnamon. It only made me imagine what my life could be like if I stayed. I could see a constellation of my future starting to take shape, one in which the points all intricately led to something I had wanted but thought I could never have.

Then I thought of moving and packing and stacks of boxes, dull brown and then soft white again. The points of my constellation fell down one by one, leaving me with a blank wall for a future. The sun had gone down at this point, and I was left in darkness. At some point I must have fallen asleep because I opened my eyes to my phone flashing. It was two in the morning, but Atlas had texted me only half an hour ago.

I'm really sorry to hear that, Archie. I know that this might sound crazy and pointless, but would you want to go on a date with me? Just to a movie or dinner or something. Even though you're moving, I'd really like to get to know you more. Today was a nice change for me.

Call it either teenage recklessness or lack of foresight or just basic, stupid hormones, but I was willing to spend whatever time I had left here getting to know Atlas. I knew there could be no future past this month, but at least I would

have this month to look back on. I had been heartbroken once before– when Noah started dating his now ex-girlfriend– so I knew what could possibly be waiting for me at the end. At least this time I had a fair warning.

I texted him back. *I really needed today, too. Pick me up at Jade's tomorrow?*

***

Atlas picked me up from Jade's house as planned, and we were on our way to see a movie. After greeting one another and asking how the other was doing, we had lapsed into a silence that felt complicit. Unlike yesterday, he played a song that he thought I might like. The lyrics were hard for me to follow because I kept thinking about what to say, but the song sounded nice. When we arrived at the single cinema in town, though, he didn't turn off his car right away.

"Are you sure you want to see a movie? We can do something else. I know we're kind of limited on time," he said. I wasn't sure if he was referring to the day or the month.

"What would you want to do instead?" I asked.

"We could go to the park and just talk some more."

That sounded like a more enjoyable use of our time, so I agreed. The truth was I had no idea what I was doing or what I wanted to do. What was I doing in this car with this boy?

He parked the car once again, and the car sat in idle for another moment. Atlas slightly opened his mouth, and I could feel something

significant taking shape as he turned to face me.

"I know this is blunt because our date has just started," Atlas said. "But can I kiss you? It's just... when I dropped you off yesterday it felt like something was there, and now I don't know what to say because it's all I can think about."

I had never been simultaneously relieved and nervous until finding out this boy wanted to kiss me as badly as I wanted to kiss him. Without words, the distance fell between us until I could smell the now familiar scent of cinnamon on his skin. It must have been a short kiss, but in it I saw constellations and something inside me clicked into place. It was as if my whole world had finally aligned with everyone else's. I had my place, and it was in this car with this boy.

"Thank you, Archie," he smiled. "I've never kissed a guy before," he said after another suspended moment. This surprised me given his connections to Trevor and Noah and what Jade had told me about him.

"I've kissed one guy before," I found myself saying. "It's why I had to transfer schools. And it's probably why my parents are making us move."

He looked out the window. "I just don't understand what's so wrong with... with this. Like why does the rest of the world care what you and I do?"

It was a question I had asked myself before. Not knowing how to respond, I asked him something else: "Will you tell me something else you've read recently? I really liked what you said yesterday."

"Um, okay," he stumbled. "Did you know that the sun is actually all of the colors combined but it appears white to our eyes?"

"Isn't that why we have rainbows?"

"Yeah, it's just the colors separating from each other."

"Tell me something else." I wanted to hear more.

"Well, the reason the sun sets in the west is because the Earth is spinning to the east at almost 900 miles an hour from where we're standing."

I risked looking at the sun for a split second then out at the park we had yet to go walking through together. A couple was walking their dog nearby. I wondered if that could ever be us. Would we look like that couple?

At the risk of sounding stupid, I said, "So... if the sun sets in the west because of the direction the world is heading in, would you say that if it set in the east, things might be different for us?"

He gave a small laugh. "Yeah, I guess what I'm saying is I'd get to be with you when the sun sets east." I knew what he meant– that we would never have a chance to really be together given that I was moving and, even if I wasn't, we didn't exactly live in a place that would let us do so peacefully– yet somehow saying it in that way made it sound hopeful, like there was a chance.

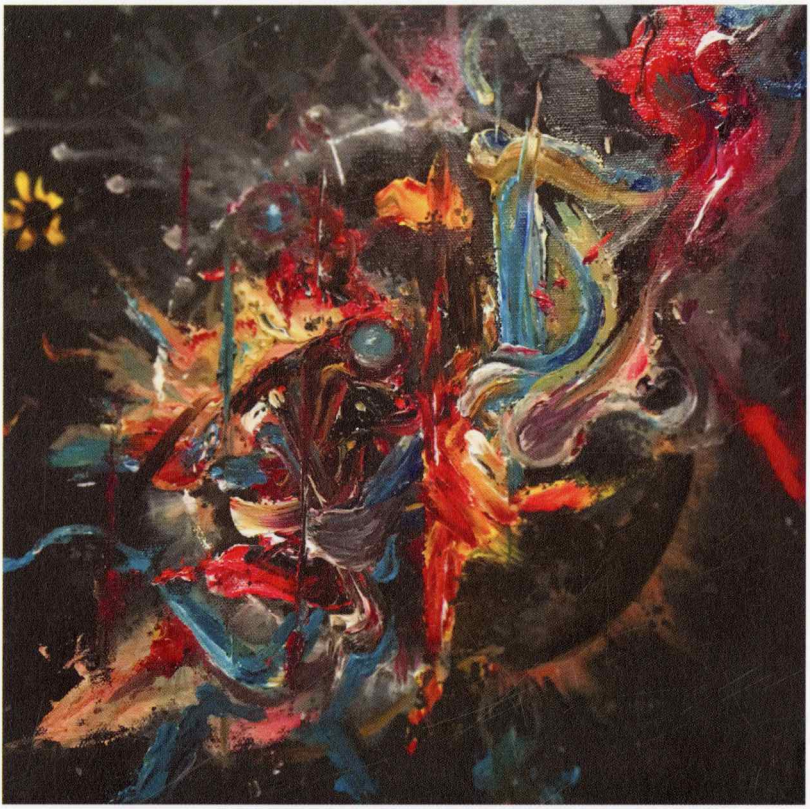
"Let's go walking," I said.

"Hey, I'm just following you now. Lead the way," Atlas said, and I wished he had meant to the end of the world.

Unbothered

Amber Quinn

Medium: Film Photography



Grape Stick

Cheyanne Smith

Medium: Oil Paint

Perspective: An Experiment in Gertrude Stein

Jessica Russell

Blue walls, blue books, blue bottle. Drowning in a sea of desperation and loneliness. Silent cross-communication falters. Bottles don't always float.
Water, water everywhere. Bang! Books fill book-cases while clothes hang on lines. Shoes scattered, notes plastered, order undone. Boxes. Bucket in closet.
Pictures, none. Prayer. Friend. Frame. Lion roars and elephant trumpets in stone. Sherlock Holmes.

Plain Black Boy Gay

Jalen Thompson

Born in Florida
Bred in Alabama
He was nothing but a
Plain black boy—gay.

Oh lord show him the way
Plain black boy—gay.

Take him to his daddy.
Take him to the Step to stay.
Take him by the church
to pray it away.

Get him some toy cars.
Don't buy him pink.
Don't let him know you know,
Or you think.

Oh lord show him the way
Plain black boy—gay.

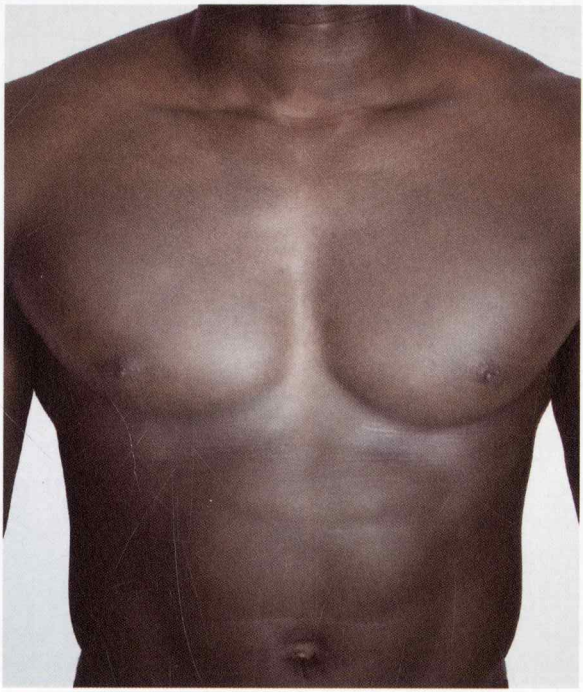
Straighten him up.
Buy him clothes that don't fit.
Don't let him do that thing
He does with his wrist.

It's your fault,
Should've prayed
Should've stayed with his daddy
Should've brought him around men,
Should've taught him their ways.

Oh lord show him the way
Plain black boy—gay.

She sits in bed with her eyes puffed
from crying of all the years
of trying to pray pray pray it away.

Oh lord show him the way
Plain black boy—gay.



Onyx

Will Henry

Medium: Digital Photography

Phantom

Audrey Mecke

My first day on Juilliard's campus was a spectacular new world and was filled to the brim with a beauty that I thought I might never experience. The city was a place that I'd only been to rarely and was a far step up from the dirty streets of Newark. The whole institution's atmosphere was bubbling with an abundance of art and artists, and that I found myself the most inspired that I have ever been. I stood in the midst of the action while my mother beckoned me, "Hurry up Killian, we're gonna miss orientation!" I couldn't help it though. I gawked with my ragged suitcases in tow at the immaculate, famous Julliard staircase. Somehow simultaneously, I felt as small as an ant but also like I finally mattered.

Even though I was lucky enough to have been admitted to the illustrious piano program, I couldn't help but stalk around the theatre building. I love theatre and feel so mesmerized by it, though the thought of acting is more daunting than I could handle. To say the school had talented actors and actresses would be an understatement—they were the best of the best. It was backstage on just the second day where I saw *her*. I immediately hid behind a wardrobe in the adjacent prop shop and stared. She had cascades of perfect brown hair that fell in ringlets framing her clear, perfect face. She was flawless.

She was checking her lipstick in the lit mirror backstage when another girl's voice called to her, "Chrissy, come on, we have reservations at

Dorsia–"

"I'm *coming*," she called back, slinging her purse over her shoulder and walking out with her heels clacking the tiles.

That night, I burst into my new dorm room, slamming the door behind me and scaring my roommate half to death.

"Thomas, what do you know about Chrissy?" My roommate Thomas was a sophomore, so I was sure he had to know something.

"Jesus, Kill, take it easy," Thomas said, sliding his headphones to his neck and rubbing his temples. I appreciated my new nickname, despite how threatening it sounded.

"Chrissy! She has brown hair and—"

"Dude, do you mean *Christina*?" Thomas accentuated every syllable then rolled his eyes. "Dude," he leaned back in his desk chair and sighed, "Like, I'm not implying she's out of your league, but...she's pretty popular. Really popular."

He told me all he knew, which was practically nothing; Thomas was very unobservant. He told me that she was a senior, that her family was "loaded," and that he heard she was relatively smart. "Maybe not a 4.0, but a 3.8. Smart enough," Thomas had said. He didn't know of anyone that knew her personally, but he assumed she had to be nice if everyone liked her so much. I tried to hold myself back from falling for her so quickly, but it was already too late.

To get closer to the theatre department and Christina, I applied for work study doing technical

theatre. The professor that had been present for my audition, Mr. Hart, really liked me. To my luck, he was also set to direct Juilliard's next theatre production of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*—one of my favorites. The job was usually reserved for internships and older students, he had said, but since my situation was special, he was able to get me the job, that is, only after giving me a stern talking-to about how quickly privileges such as these might be revoked.

On my first day of work I was admittedly frazzled, and I definitely looked it. My hair had to be pulled back in a low ponytail because it kept getting tangled around the microphone, which I very much despised. The official stage manager was out sick, and the ASM was off flirting with the first flautist, so I was left as the only one behind the dimly lit screens of the booth. I sunk down in my chair, trying to deter the feeling of being so exposed while I tried to look busy, but also secretly reading through the play's script to reread my favorite parts.

A girl's voice came seemingly out of nowhere. "Why do you have your cans on backwards?"

I jumped visibly, accidentally pressing the sound of a phone ringing on the bell board. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it was Christina.

"My what?" I asked. She pointed to her ears. "Oh!" I exclaimed, "I uh, I just have a thing where I'm sort of deaf in my right ear so..." I cut myself off, making vague hand gestures up around my

ears and laughing nervously. Everyone up by the stage was still trying to figure out if it was their phone they heard ringing.

She laughed too. "Funny and cute." Immediately, I hoped the electronic blue lights would somehow neutralize the red I could feel pooling in my cheeks. "You're Killian, right?"

"Yes...and you're Christina, but how do you...?" I must have looked astonished from how she giggled.

"I heard about you from our director. He says you're the most skilled pianist they admitted this year. A real Beethoven for talent, all the way down to being hearing impaired."

"That sure is nice of him," I said, too awestruck by the girl's presence to even tell her that the correct term was "hard of hearing."

"Well, Killian, I'd love to hear you play sometime." She winked and started to walk away. "Oh, and by the way, you can call me Tina."

***

From that moment on, I was hers. The feeling of complete submersion was overwhelming, like I had no choice but to bend to her every desire. Tina always came in late with her signature Triple, Venti, Soy, No Foam Latte from the Starbucks on the corner of 66th and Amsterdam proudly wearing her Juilliard sweatshirt with her Gucci crossbody. Despite how in demand she was, she chose to sit and chat by me every break she had.

"Don't you just adore it here, Killian?" she sighed, sipping her drink. "It feels so amazing to be here, doesn't it?"

I smiled, drinking my water from the vending machine, "It really does."

"I worked my whole life to come here, but thank God I had tutors. They came to my home every day and taught me to sing and act and dance. It all paid off though, because look where I am," Tina stared off into space.

"It did. You're so talented, Tina."

"My parents paying that extra buck for the early college program made a huge difference, I can't believe everyone doesn't do it—it makes you a shoe-in for acceptance."

I tried not to reveal much of my history, and I sensed that she must have understood because she never asked. Personally, applying to Juilliard was the most arduous undertaking I had ever done in my life. For the last two years of high school, all I did was practice and prepare myself for auditions that I knew would be beyond rigorous. I listened to piano pieces during my classes on earbuds that I told the teacher were hearing aids, and I rushed through all my schoolwork in study hall so that I had all night to play on the cheap keyboard in my room. Still, even with studying nonstop, there was no guarantee I would get accepted; my financial situation was nowhere close to affording the prestigious school. I was floored when I got the letter. Even though there were no full scholarships available for freshmen, the board offered me a generous work study position, gave me substantial piano scholarships, and promised me a place in the Fellowship if I could only just make it through the first two years.

I didn't dare mention the words "student loans" to Tina, in fear of a pitying look she might give me that I didn't deserve.

Knowing that I was at the school for piano playing, Tina begged to hear me play. I refused for as long as I could, but I could no longer resist her puppy eyes and batting eyelashes, so we snuck off together to the grand piano in the neighboring classroom building during the middle of rehearsal. Tina hit the lights and sat by me on the bench.

"What would you like me to play?" I asked.

"I don't know, Killy, just play your favorite!"

My face flushed, and I let my hair fall so she wouldn't see. I chose the most appropriate thing I thought of and played Liszt's waltz from Gounod's opera *Faust*. I closed my eyes, and played it. Being one of my favorites, I had it memorized from playing it so much. When I opened my eyes, Tina's eyes were sparkling.

"Killian... Are you kidding me?"

"What?" I laughed, never able to hold back nervous smiles.

"That was incredible. You *have* to play the piano for my review in two weeks!"

"What? Me? But I can't, I have work," I stammered, brushing my hair behind my ears, and shaking my head. "I mean I'd love to, but the time, it's too soon."

"But you're perfect for an accompaniment!" Tina looked hard in my eyes and chewed her lips. "I... I actually haven't gotten anyone yet, and everyone now is booked, so it would be so

perfect if you could play for me. It's my only hope of passing, Killy"

"I don't know," I said furrowing my brows in confusion.

"Listen," she said with her eyes darting around the ground, "I know you love this play, right?"

I nodded.

"Well... I could get *you* to play the piano for the play. Lead piano."

"What? That's impossible—"

"You're *so* good, they'll make an exception, I promise, I'll tell Mr. Hart all about it. This will look *great* on your resume, it will be *perfect*." She was talking so fast and smiling so wide I couldn't help but nod along and melt when she clasped her hands around mine.

"Really? You really could do that?" I couldn't believe what I was hearing; it almost sounded too good to be true.

"Killian, I promise." She held out her pinky, and I wrapped mine around hers. "*You* are what's going to make this show fantastic."

***

The practices became much more hectic after our rendezvous in the piano classroom. Tina delivered me what felt like armfuls of piano pieces for her review. She told me that Mr. Hart said I could take off work to practice for such a big part, too, so I was working much less. It was surreal to be able to play for a show in such high regard so early in my music career. I was ecstatic and dreamed about the possible scholarship

opportunities that might open if I could impress the board at Juilliard even more than I had before.

I was especially excited to tell my mother all about it. I knew our long Skype conversations annoyed Thomas, but he was nice to not ever act like they did.

"Mom, not only is she beautiful and perfect, she's making connections for me, isn't that great?"

"That sounds amazing Killian, I can't wait to meet her." My mom smiled at me, signing as she talked. "Don't go fallin' so fast though, Killian, your heart always runs faster than your legs do."

"I won't, mom, I promise," I said exasperatedly at the mini-lecture. "You are going to love her."

"I sure am jealous of her right now, getting to see my boy all the time. I miss you so much, Killy, this house is so empty without you. Gustav misses you, too." She held up my non-dorm approved ferret, wiggling happily in her hands.

"I miss you both, too ... but I'm having an amazing time." I looked at my hands, fidgeting with my cuticles. I took a pause. "Thank you so much for letting me come here—"

"Shh, you're going to make me cry. Hurry home, as soon as you can." Tears welled in her eyes while she pet Gustav's head.

"I promise, mom, I will."

***

Tina was becoming busier and busier as well with her review preparation and her practice for

her lead role of Gretchen in the play. Our bond grew stronger, and she entrusted me with tasks that she never did with anyone else. I was the one she chose to bring her the Triple, Venti, Soy, No Foam Latte when she was too preoccupied to leave set. The skills I gained from forty or so essays that I wrote in scholarship contests also came in handy as I helped out with various homework assignments of hers leading up to the premiere. I was barely sleeping from the ever-multiplying work on top of my own schoolwork, but it felt so fulfilling to finally be involved in something so wonderful.

It finally came time for Christina's solo review in the midst of all our practicing for *Doctor Faustus*. She did beautifully—her singing was angelic and her acting was divine. I happened to catch many glances towards me as well, and I hoped that it wasn't because how I looked was distracting. It didn't seem to be that way though, the way the judges so earnestly shook my hands and smiled at me with their twinkling wrinkled eyes. One man patted me on the back and told me that he hoped she was paying me generously for my time and talent, and I smiled back, knowing I was.

"Wow, you did *fantastic*. You will surely pass, Tina, with flying colors," I had a pep in my step from the adrenaline of a job well done, half skipping down the sidewalk. "Thank you for such a generous opportunity to help you."

"No, Killian, thank *you*," she said intently, grabbing my hand. There was a pause, before

she suggested, "Look, let's have a night out together, how about it?"

"Of course!" I stammered, trying to play it off like I wasn't shocked.

But I was. A gorgeous girl asking *me* out on a date. High school had been bleak, no girls or boys had much of an interest in me. Tina being so unfazed was a breath of fresh air. Tina suggested getting pizza, which I was thankful for knowing how pricey Manhattan restaurants could be. She absolutely insisted it be in her apartment as well, saying she was intent on not intruding on my roommate in the dorm. I bought us a Hawaiian on gluten free crust to Tina's liking, and we sat on her couch in the dark watching *Cats* and poking fun at it.

"This musical is ridiculous," Christina rolled her eyes, "Why would anyone think this could ever be a good idea?"

"I don't know, Webber's other stuff is pretty good..."

"Killian," she looked at me suddenly with a hint of sadness in her eyes. "You know, you really are a great guy, right?"

I couldn't help but look away and smile, "I'm so honored that you think so, Christina."

"No, I mean it," her voice was quieter and I had a hard time understanding her. "You are so talented, you deserve a lot more than just being here at this school. You're special, Killian."

"You know I think the world of you, Tina, you're truly incredible."

"No, Killian, you're not listening, this is about

you—"

She cut herself off, sighing and shaking her head, and looked out the window. I didn't know what was happening until she kissed me. It happened so fast that I wished I could have slowed time, relived it. She reached her hand out and cupped my face, giving me a peck on the lips and cheek. It was such a small gesture but left me absolutely dumbfounded. *She really likes me*, I thought to myself, sitting completely still with my heart beating like a drum.

Both of our heads snapped around when we heard a racket behind us, the sound of someone fumbling with the lock on the front door before it clicked, and a figure burst into the room with the light from the hallway spilling in behind it.

"Gosh, Megan, could you ease up a little?" Tina sighed and pressed her palm to her forehead.

"Hey, Chrissy," Megan slurred. "Ooh, who do you have over here?" She squinted in the dark. "No, you gotta be kidding me, is that the weird boy from—"

"*No*," Christina said harshly, quickly standing and rushing to her inebriated roommate. "No, it's not a weird boy, it's Killian. You need to go to bed, *now*," she hissed through her teeth and pushed Megan in the direction of her room while she laughed and snorted.

After Tina had shut the door, she drug her feet over the carpet back to where I was standing. Tina sighed. "I'm sorry Kill, I'm going to need to take care of Meg here tonight. I'm sorry to cut the night short." I nodded and smiled politely that

I understood; not even bad roommates could get me down after such a great night. Even though I was as courteous as I could be and appreciative, I felt bad because Tina still had that sad look in her eyes. I hoped she didn't think she had disappointed me.

***

I saw a lot less of Tina after our tryst, but the deadline was almost here and I didn't think much of it; I knew all her free time was being spent practicing. What did surprise me was when Mr. Hart tapped me on the shoulder while I was working and motioned for me to follow him. I couldn't see his face in the dark, but I hoped that he had finally come to me to comment on my hard work. I felt the burning of pride in my chest as we walked out into the lobby of the theater building to talk.

"Killian, you know how highly I think of you, son. Now, I've turned my head as long as I possibly could, but the closer opening night gets I can't afford you that privilege." He slid his headphones down to his neck and looked down at me.

My eyebrows furrowed in confusion, "I'm sorry sir, I beg your pardon?"

My ignorance made his frown deeper. "You have been missing far too many hours at work, did you not think I wouldn't notice? Listen, I could excuse a few absences, I know you're a freshman, you have a lot on your plate, but this is getting out of hand."

"I don't understand, Christina told me she talked it out with you?" His eyebrows raised

incredulously at the name drop.

"Talked what out with me, exactly?"

"That she... She wanted me to be the lead pianist in the play, it was what she offered in return for me playing at her review." The more confused he looked, the heavier my heart became. "I said I could only do that if I wasn't working as much, she... she didn't tell you?"

The director threw his hands up to his head, "Are you kidding me?" he exclaimed. I shrank back and wrung my hands, and he gathered himself slightly. "No, no, Killian, you aren't in trouble, you don't know. Freshmen can't be the lead musicians in these plays, only upperclassmen are qualified to even *audition*. And *certainly*...," he let out a laugh he was so frustrated, "Certainly, other actors are not qualified to appoint their friends as the lead musician." My heart felt like it was made from cast iron.

Mr. Hart put his hands on my shoulders. "Killian, I'm going to have a talk with Christina. Don't worry, no one will blame you, you aren't in trouble," he repeated. "We'll just have to see if we can actually get anyone to blame our little princess either," he muttered under his breath. He told me one more time that it wasn't my fault, but the rage bubbling underneath his comforting demeanor had me shaken.

Tina had already left when the director and I had our talk, and I tried texting her but the messages were left unopened and unanswered. As soon as my shift was over, which I obviously stayed the full time for, I walked out into the cold

city air in the direction of Tina's apartment. My mind raced through all the different situations that might have occurred to create this vast misunderstanding. It simply wasn't a possibility that Tina could be blamed for what happened, I assumed it had to be some sort of honest mistake where, like me, she just didn't know better. She had been the best part of my life these past months; the implications that the director was making were not even feasible. I needed to see her, face to face, but dread permeated through my skin as I realized the last time I had even been face to face with her was at this apartment two weeks ago.

When the elevator door opened on her floor, I heard the dull roar of music blaring from a near distance. Approaching Tina's door, its source became apparent. I knocked on the door, but the music was so loud that no one heard. About to leave, I tried the door handle for good measure, and shockingly, it opened. I was in the middle of mentally chiding the girls as I walked through the doorway. I crept through the darkened entryway and looked upon the dense crowd of people. I felt immediately uncomfortable, but couldn't leave without getting the truth out of Christina. Peeking around the corner, I saw her folded between her gaggle of friends, red cup in tow. No one saw me still; there were so many people and so much ruckus it was hard to make out what all was happening. I was just about to round the corner when what I heard stopped me dead in my tracks.

used by the one person I had trusted. My footsteps became harder, louder on the pavement below me, my cheeks dried. I couldn't let them get away with this, and I wasn't going to.

***

I spent the next few days thinking of what I could concoct to get back at her. I wanted her to feel as humiliated as I did, and I wanted the show to suffer. Actually firing the pianist would be too complicated, as there were always replacements. Physical damage to the production would have to suffice. The director was right, too, Christina had not even been confronted on her behavior yet, so as not to distract the leading lady only days before opening night. That meant that she still thought I was all in to perform and be made an ass in front of the entire school. She even called to me while I was working and blew a kiss at me. I pretended that I didn't hear her and kept working on incorrectly relabeling the sound and light board.

On the final night before opening and the very last dress rehearsal, I heard a rumor of a pre-production party on the stage itself. As the rehearsal ended, I had just finished cutting the wires inside of the gorgeous grand piano set to be used. I was up in the catwalks above the stage, sawing through the ropes controlling the movement of the curtains. Sure enough, they all began to gather gaily onstage, bringing out Pink Moscato and Four Loko once the adults had gone. They all must have thought it was cute to wear nothing but their underwear after putting

their costumes away. I scoffed. I spotted Christina in the midst of the crowd yapping to her friends, sipping her cup politely in a black lace bra that I'm sure she bought special for the "impromptu" occasion.

This was it.

It took around fifteen minutes of reassuring myself to gain the confidence to do what I was about to do. I steadied myself, and let the heavy clamor of my boots on metal steps interrupt the party, bringing everyone to a deafening hush.

In a moment, every pair of eyes was on me. They all stared. Most were shocked, some even gaping with open mouths like goldfish gasping for water. However, the room felt flooded.

"Killian what are you doing here?" Christina sounded a mix of accusatory and guilty, and I relished her guilt. Sadism was something I wasn't used to, but now it was a breath of fresh air, and my guilt and shame that had been programmed into me disintegrated.

"Well, Christina, I'm just at the pre-production party like we all are, right?" Christina faltered as I spoke, descending the stairs from above the stage. "Oh, but wait!" I mocked surprise, "Was I not invited?"

Tina seemed to look around the room for some sort of person or thing to blame the "error" on. But this was no spontaneous party. The full cast was in attendance and the rest of the crew was integrated amongst them. Christina rushed to me when she noticed that I was taking in my surroundings. "Killian, just calm down, you're

making a scene, it's not a big deal, let's go talk about this somewhere else," she whispered into my right ear, and I barely heard her. She couldn't even remember the ear I was deaf in.

"What? And miss the party?" I paced around the stage, the middle now completely clear as my beloved cast mates backed up like they were looking at a dangerous animal or a monster. Christina backed up now too, retreating to her flock. I seethed, "What the *fuck* do you think you're all doing?" The boy playing Mephistopheles moved forward, arms outstretched to grab me. I shoved him back and into their flimsy plastic folding table covered in gourmet desserts and red cups. A collective gasp arose, and I stared down Christina, who had predictably chosen the mask of a victim, eyes wide with running mascara at the corners and her penciled in eyebrows arched in a pitiful gesture.

"This is how you choose to treat me? I play for your review and this is what I get in return?" I said in rage.

"Killian, no, it's not what it seems—" Tina shook her head so dramatically it shook her whole body.

"Tell me, Christina, was I supposed to show up tomorrow humiliated, get fired from my job, and what? You all laugh?"

I looked around at the mess, the confused and guilty faces. I read their lips and saw that they only felt remorse once they were caught. My anger had subsided back into a dull flame. "Good luck on your show. You can count that I

won't be in attendance."

I left after that, and went straight to my dorm room, telling Thomas not to let anyone in. I was bombarded with calls and texts and direct message requests from Christina all night begging for forgiveness, that she didn't think it through, that she didn't *intend* to hurt me. Despite her pleas, I never answered, and I let the show go down in flames as well as my future at Juilliard.

I only texted my mother, "I'm coming home."

Reflection

Cheyanne Smith

Medium: Oil Paint

Unflower

Levi Pulford

Medium: Digital Photography

tumbleweed

Paige Wyatt

i used to think that
you were my favorite mistake
my most common what-if
my one that got away
But, now i've gotten the idea
that maybe, just maybe
you are actually the one that
worked out like you were supposed to

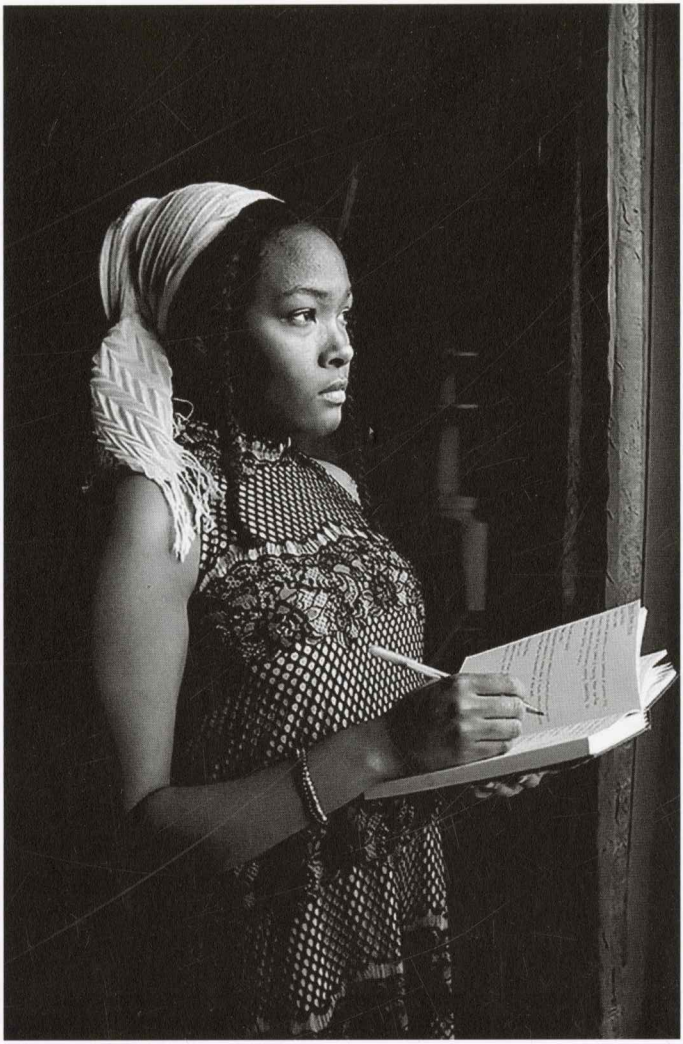
you stopped in
decided we were right for the time
stayed a while
got comfortable
let love happen
let love stay for a bit
let love simmer
and then left
with the same wind
that blew you in
in the first place

I have more than gotten used to the room
that you've left in the bed next to me
gotten used to getting coffee for one
even though i know your order
gotten used to not actually knowing why you're gone
but not letting myself think about it

I have also learned to listen
to all those people who say
it is better to have loved

Because while most of me says
that is bullshit
a lot of me realizes
that you are the one
i will tell stories about
when i'm asked about
what dominated love in my youth
what helped me grow
what made me appreciate the wind
Because the wind takes and gives

And while that is just a fact of life
it has let me know that
some things that only stay for a minute
end up meaning more
than those that are more stationary
and that you
are the definition of
good and simple things
that go where the wind takes them



Untitled

Amber Quinn

Medium: Digital Photography

The Pause of Literally

Robert McHenry

Is a baby hot when it leaves the womb?
The doctor's cold hands grasp its backside
The cold is a shock, not an acceptance

Making out is disgusting.
Two tongues intertwined,
Exchanging long distance travelers
Germs are freeloaders.
Weren't we taught not to spread them?

Is a man embarrassed by the size of his buttocks?
The black female wears it with pride, or does she?
Scientific Gossip: female species have enlarged body proportions for mating.
David defeats Goliath.
Tom loses to Jerry.

You confuse the taste buds.
The boy burned his tongue on the tea.
Everything tastes like water.
Does water even have a taste?

"Never judge a book by its cover."
The Bible.
A man with a swastika on his face.
The black youth killed for appearance.
The smiling best friend.

Seriously. Literally.

Unrequited

Isaac Moore

lying in bed
eyes follow the blades, slowly rotating on the ceiling
...a pitiful distraction.

stop thinking about her
you know you should-
you need to...

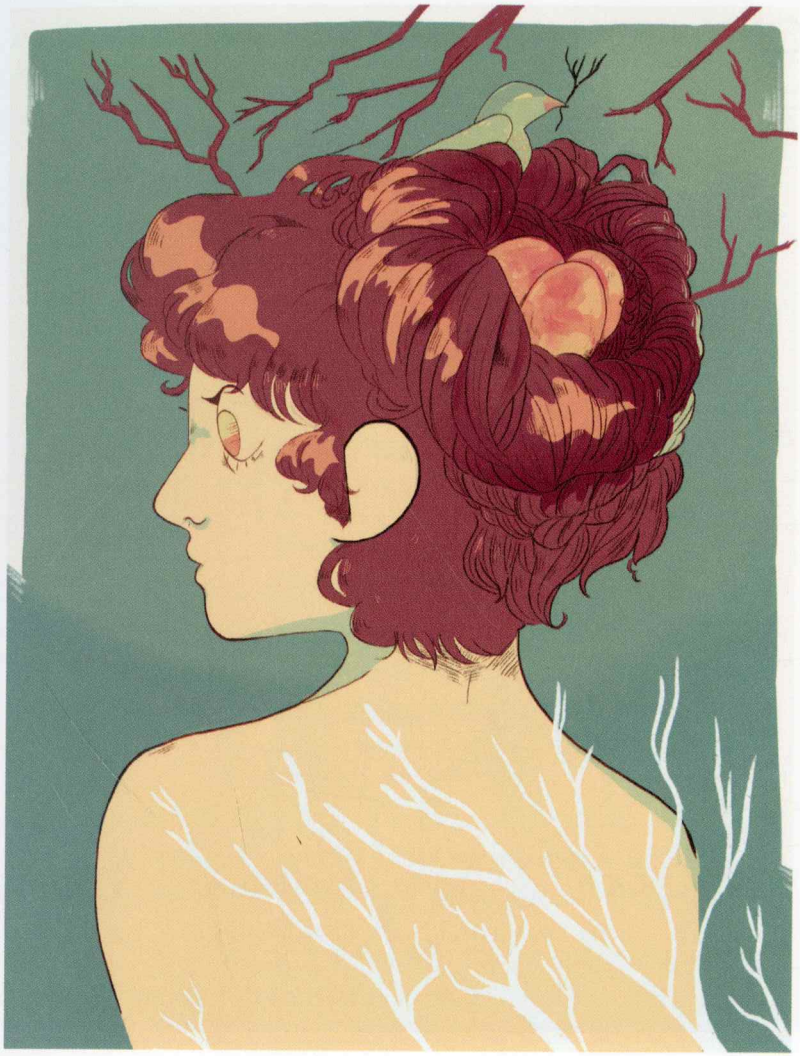
—and there, like a dream
the singular cloud upon clear blue skies
she can be whatever you want her to be

...but a dream is but a dream
a manufactured muse manifested by a lonely fuck
"unrequited"

—and like a ghost! this woman appears
bringing you back to life with her lips of thallium,
a perfect poison.

the dream lingers, a whisp
as you see her loving you
but why is love not enough?

trapped in a home you can leave at anytime.



Bird's Nest

Luzena Donell

Medium: Digital Art

Valkyrie March

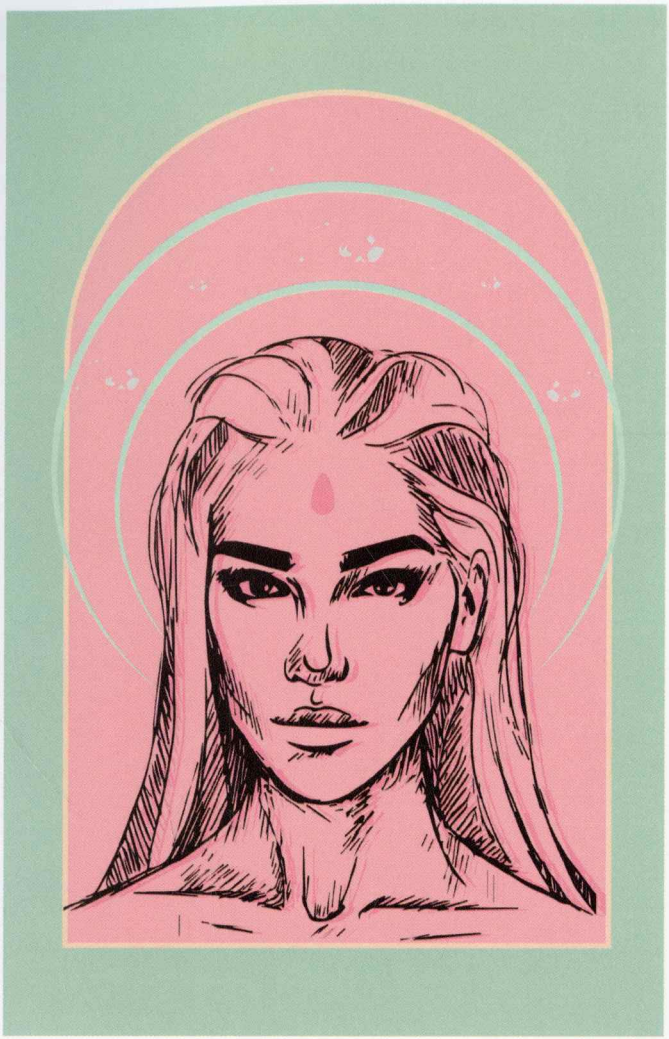
Chelsea Yates

Astrid
Love notes, like body bags fester, oozing glitter
Slam the door to your heart-to-heart debasing
Pink tarp envelopes float down the river
Saying "Forget me not" Forget me. Erase.

Candice
Days left with smeared lips, warm imprint
On foggy car windows, sweat-slicked skin.
Days nestled in a dazed honeysuckle scent,
Feelings crying "when will I get that again?"

Ruth
Encase this Eros driven sap to Reason
Briny arrows drench flame out of every girl.
Lust to dust and you, secretion
Drained of pallor, corpse to our bloody pearls.

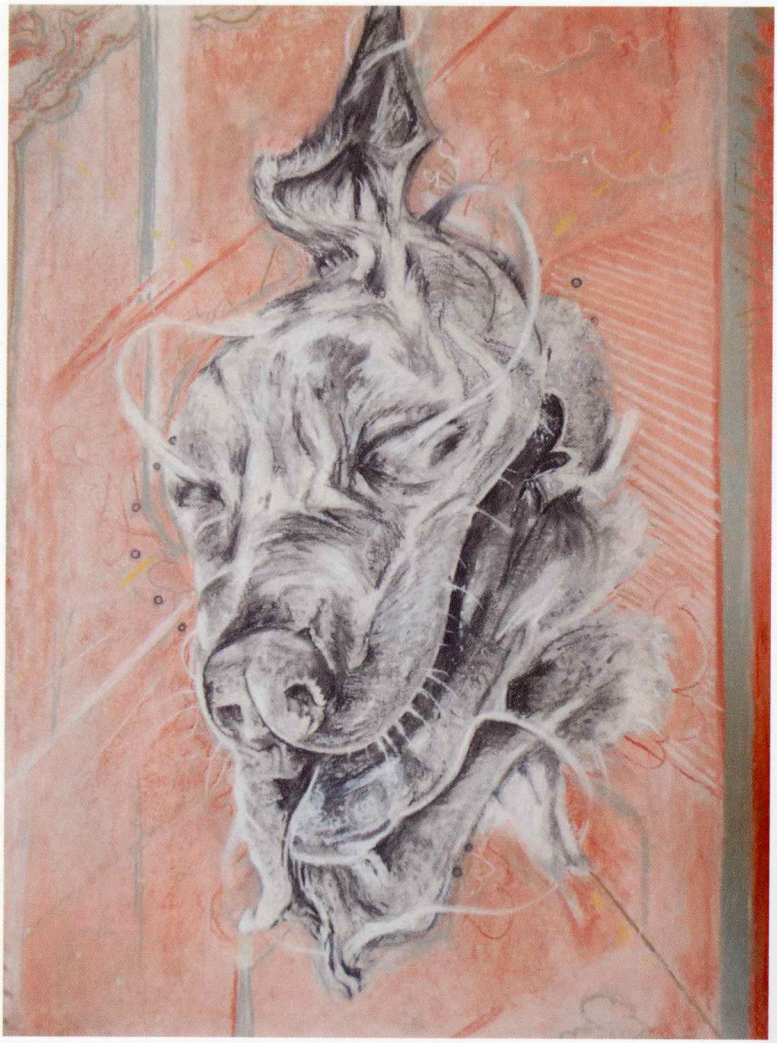
All
Shy crush crushed, craved body, soft petals bruised
Until scorn rages and blazes, we stand,
Together for no man. We are no longer used.
Free not from hurt, but demand.



Patel Witch

Will Henry

Medium: Graphic Design



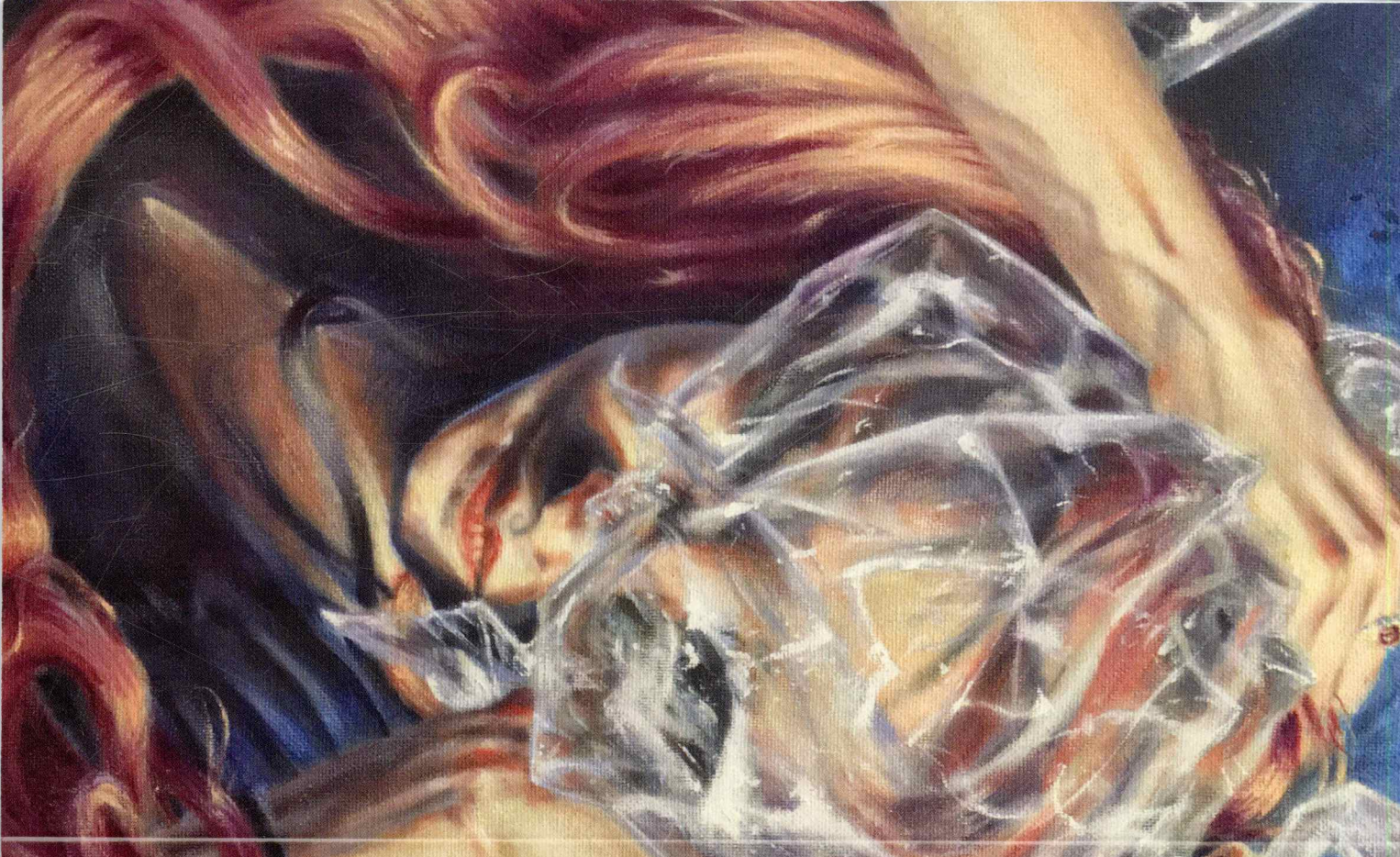
Tuesday

Cheyanne Smith

Medium: Charcoal and Chalk Pastel

The Price

Chelsea Yates

You think you're safe. You feel safe with your door locked. You know if anyone tries to enter the alarm will go off. So you put on your slippers and recline with the TV on a low buzz, right next to the goddamn door. That's how they suck you in. Goodbye Mr. Advil Rosé Deadbeat Mother Fucker. You secretly want them to take you—it leaves you feeling glazed. The good kind where the world is as concrete as that static on the screen. Let them take you—dreams, passions, the nagging droning voice of Lady Pantsuit in your ear yelling, "Goals. Goals. Goals."

Don't be safe.